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To members of the Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation

I am alarmed that our food regulator FSANZ (Food Standards Australia New Zealand) is proposing changes to our food regulations that would allow a wide range of new GM foods into the foods we consume, with no regulation and no labelling. Really? If and this is a bit IF, this wide range of new Genetically Modified foods are allowed into the foods we consume, then it is ESSENTIAL that there be regulation and labelling so people know and can make informed choices as to whether or not they wish to consume them

Polling shows most Australians, and indeed, most global citizens, don't want to eat genetically modified (GM) foods. All GM foods should be independently assessed for their health and environmental hazards and risks, be labelled as GM, and be traceable. This will allow farmers, food producers, retailers, and shoppers to avoid them, for many important reasons.

I very strongly oppose changes to the Food Code that would allow a wide range of GM foods, made using novel methods that have scant history of safe use, to be sold without safety assessment or labelling. These would include meat and milk from some genetically modified animals and substances like vanilla and stevia produced by genetically modified microbes in factory vats. These changes completely undermine FSANZ's key responsibilities - to ensure food safety and our right to know what is in our food.

This is like putting Dracula in charge of the Bloodbank - completely ludicrous! Agrochemical companies cannot be trusted to self-assess the safety of GM foods. They already have an appalling record of manipulating data to promote dangerous products. Trust them? No way!

Gene editing techniques have been found to make genetic changes that could never occur in nature and to result in widespread genetic damage that often goes undetected by GM developers, or may take many decades to show up.

I am deeply concerned that FSANZ has relied on advice from scientists with serious conflicts of interest, to conclude these new GM foods pose no greater risks than existing foods. Those seeking to commercialise GM plants, animals and microbes should play no role in deciding how - or even whether - foods derived from them should be regulated.

The proposed changes would make Australia one of very few countries in the world to allow genetically modified animal products into our food chain with no regulation or labelling. This would put us at odds with our international trading partners. FSANZ even admits "this may have a significant impact on trade". The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, an international agreement signed by 166 governments worldwide, and the UN's food standards body Codex Alimentarius agree that all GM techniques differ from conventional breeding and that pre-market safety assessments are essential before GM organisms are used in food.

I support expanding the definition for 'gene technology' so FSANZ continues to assess and regulate all techniques and methods of genetic modification, other than conventional breeding. The proposal to

deregulate new and emerging GM techniques and their food products, which pose new and unassessed risks, is completely and utterly unacceptable.

Thank you for taking my well-founded and informed concerns into consideration.

Yours sincerely,

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